

Plaza Ferdinand VII  
Pensacola  
Escambia County  
Florida

HABS No. FLA-207 HABS  
FLA.  
17-PENSA,  
19-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

## PLAZA FERDINAND VII

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Location: The plaza is located in the southeast section of Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida, within the Historical District near Pensacola Bay. It is bounded by South Palafox, East Government, South Jefferson, and East Zaragoza Streets.

Present Owner and Occupant: City of Pensacola

Present Use: Public open space

Statement of Significance: Plaza Ferdinand provides a focal point for the city and county government buildings.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. History:

The present plaza, named for King Ferdinand VII of Spain, was originally a cleared area to the west of the British stockade which had been built after 1763 during the British occupation of Pensacola. The Spanish, who regained control in 1781, allowed the stockade to deteriorate, but retained the east Seville Square (HABS No. FLA-208) and on the west Plaza Ferdinand. The open spaces were officially platted in 1813 by Vincente S. Pintado, a Spanish captain of military and His Majesty's surveyor general of West Florida. In 1821 Andrew Jackson accepted the formal transfer of Spain's title to Florida for the United States in the plaza. Jackson and Spanish Governor Callava were present at the ceremony at which the Spanish and American flags were lowered and raised, respectively, on two flag standards. The Fourth U. S. Infantry Band played the "Star Spangled Banner," which was one of the first times that the song was aired at an official ceremony in this country according to the National Intelligencer, April 18, 1821.

## B. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: None known
2. Secondary and published sources:

National Intelligencer (Washington, D.C.), April 18, 1821.

Niles Register, August 23, 1821.

Paiton, Life of Jackson.

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Prepared by Rodd L. Wheaton  
Architect, HABS  
1972

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Site and Surroundings: The plaza is a flat site extending approximately 190 feet east-west on East Government and Zaragoza Streets and 390 feet north-south on South Jefferson and Palafox Streets. Significant buildings which surround the plaza include the City Hall, a two-and-a-half story Mission Style building which faces west on Jefferson Street. Across the street on the southwest corner of Jefferson and Zaragoza Streets is the former Escambia County Police Department and Jail, also in the Mission Style. This structure has been imaginatively converted to the Pensacola Arts Center. The two-story masonry G. A. Peaden Building is located at the southeast corner of Palafox and Zaragoza Streets. On the 1880 site of the Pensacola telephone exchange at the northeast corner of Palafox and Government Streets is located the ten-story brick Empire Building with its terra cotta ornamented street facades. The lot behind that building and facing south onto the plaza is vacant. The Second Renaissance Revival, three-and-a-half story Escambia County Court House is located at the northwest corner of Palafox and Government Streets. One, two, and three-story masonry buildings fill in the west side of Palafox Street, the south side of Zaragoza Street and the northeast corner of Jefferson and Government Streets. The Pensacola Opera House was originally located at the latter site. Like other early structures which faced the plaza, the three-story Opera House had decorative cast iron detailed porches and galleries over the sidewalks. The accompanying photocopy of an old photograph illustrates this aspect of the early character of the plaza.

The design of the plaza is symmetrical about a north-south axis focusing on a monumental granite obelisk on a moulded base and pedestal dedicated to William Dudley Chipley, a veteran of the Civil War, who was the founder of the Pensacola Atlantic Railroad. Walks paved with gray and white cement tiles in a diagonal checkerboard pattern extend from the corners of the plaza to a similarly paved area around the raised, square, brick podium of the Chipley Monument. Plain concrete walks extend on an east-west axis from the monument. A south concrete walk passes through raised planting beds and centers near Zaragoza Street

on a granite pedestal with a bronze plaque, erected by the Pensacola Historical Society in 1930, commemorating the acceptance of Florida from Spain July 17, 1821. A small wood frame, roofed structure south of the memorial pedestal and an east-west cross-walk shelters display information. A wood mast with a cross beam and guy wires is immediately north of the pedestal on axis. 19- HABS FLA 17-PENSA

In the north section of the plaza there is a modern raised octagonal pool with a lighted fountain near Government Street. A granite pedestal at the north edge of the surrounding pool paving commemorates T. T. Wentworth, Jr. for his efforts in preserving the historical heritage of Pensacola. Crosswalks connect the pool area to the main plaza walks.

A concrete pier at the west side of the plaza contains a basic bench mark of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey set in place in 1930.

Two muzzle loading cannon are located on brick and concrete piers at the north corners and at the southwest corner of the plaza. Raised planters with bench recesses in their brick retaining walls, a low rubble stone wall with a cement cap surrounding the plaza at the edge of the cement tile and concrete street sidewalks, modern gas lamps and electric floodlights, benches and trash containers complete the plaza furnishings.

Grass ground cover and informal groupings of live oaks, magnolias, azaleas, dogwoods and various ornamental plants are used as landscape material.

Prepared by F. Blair Reeves, AIA  
HABS--Pensacola  
July 17, 1968

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project, sponsored by the Pensacola Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission, now known as the Historic Pensacola Preservation Board of Trustees, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, was recorded during the summer of 1968 in Pensacola under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS; Professor F. Blair Reeves, AIA (University of Florida), Project Supervisor; and Student Assistant Architects John O. Crosby (University of Florida), David L. Van de Ven, Jr. (Texas Technological College), and Edward Bondi, Jr. (University of Florida). The historical information was prepared by Professor Samuel Proctor (University of Florida), by Assistant Historian Linda V. Ellsworth (Historic Pensacola Preservation Board), and by Rodd L. Wheaton (Architect, HABS) who edited all the data in 1972.